

bush near Kiunga village (1.45S, 41.21E) in southeast Kenya, and the identification was confirmed by a specimen collected by M.E.W. North. Britton (1980) suggested that a sight record of several in the Mundane Range near Kiunga in August 1971 referred to the Somali coastal race *kismayensis*.

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- Received 29 March 1983
- Scopus* 7: 89-90, September/December 1983

#### A PAIR OF WHITE-BACKED NIGHT HERONS *GORSACHIUS LEUCONOTUS* IN SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK, TANZANIA

The White-backed Night Heron is a rarely seen bird anywhere within its range in East Africa (Britton 1980).

On 27 June 1981 we were camping in Serengeti National Park about 200 m west of the Kirawira Rangers' Post (c. 2.10S 34.30E), about 40 km east of Lake Victoria. Our campsite was on the left bank of the Grumeti River, near several unused National Parks' rondavels. The habitat is gallery forest with large trees, thick undergrowth and dense bushes bordering the river.

At about 06:30 MK approached the river bank and flushed what was immediately recognized as a White-backed Night Heron. The bird landed across the river, here about 10 m wide, and was promptly displaced by an Eastern Grey Plantain Eater *Crinifer zonurus*. Before flying off to MK's side of the river again it raised its crest slightly and fanned out its white scapulars. A few minutes later, from a very dense overhanging bush about 15 m downstream, the heron was flushed again, this time followed by another; both birds landed across the river in the tree where the first bird was originally sighted. The two birds were watched for about 20 min until they walked deeper into the vegetation.

They were rather deliberate and seemed unconcerned about the presence of an observer. They recalled the Neotropical Boat-billed Heron *Cochlearius cochlearius* in their demeanour.

The rufous colour of the breast was more vibrant than expected, the white back plumes always visible, the white chin and the eye ring very conspicuous, even on the bird sitting in the shadows; the crest was flat against the nape except at one point, when the presumed male initiated a courtship gesture: facing the other bird with slightly lowered head, it partially raised its crest and fanned out its pure white lanceolated scapulars in a shallow V. This behaviour lasted two or three minutes until, eventually the bird walked slowly into the shadows.

Returning to the site a short time later with PA, we flushed one heron from the same dense bush on the left bank; it landed across the stream in the same

tree, affording another, more obstructed view.

According to recent literature (e.g. Schmidl 1982), this appears to be the first record for the Serengeti National Park.

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#### SUCCESSFUL BREEDING OF GREATER FLAMINGO *PHOENICOPTERUS RUBER* AT LAKE NAKURU, KENYA

Greater Flamingos breed irregularly at several lakes in East Africa. At Lake Nakuru from 1951-71, flamingos attempted breeding - unsuccessfully - only once, in 1963 (Brown et al. 1973). No further breeding was observed there after 1971 (Vareschi 1978, D. Schmidl and P. Wirtz pers. comm., and authors' obs.). The only recorded successful breeding by the Greater Flamingo took place in 1915 and 1936 (Meinertzhagen 1958).

Numbers of Lesser (*Phoeniconaias minor*) and Greater Flamingos declined to a few hundreds by early 1980 and continued to be low until 1982, when numbers increased rapidly in May and June to between 200 000 and 500 000. In the meantime large numbers of Lesser Flamingos gathered at Lake Bogoria where they attempted to breed from December 1980 to June 1981. However, no fledglings were recorded. All breeding attempts failed, obviously due to the slowly falling water level and/or to disturbance through tourists walking too close to the colony.

After the flamingos returned to Lake Nakuru they were always present in great numbers, and at least the Greater bred there successfully early in 1983. The first two grey downy chicks were seen on 27 March near the causeway at the southern end of the lake. On 3 April 35-40 downy chicks were seen below Lion Hill Camp and 15 others were seen on 6th at the north shore. The two downy chicks seen first were still following their parents, which constantly gave contact calls, and one of the young on 3rd was seen to be fed by a Greater Flamingo. Among the grey young no distinctly lighter ones were seen (lighter coloured chicks might have indicated successful breeding of the smaller species (Brown 1955)).

Small groups of Lesser and Greater Flamingos engaged in nest-building around the lake until at least mid June. The largest concentration was near the main gate of the Park where, on 5 June, one egg was seen in a nest after the flamingos had been disturbed by tourists walking too close to the colony. In June, however, the water level had receded noticeably and most nests were no longer surrounded by water, making another successful breeding most unlikely.

All young were seen far away from any nesting colony, which means they were at least 10 d old, perhaps even 1-2 weeks older. Given an approximate incubation period of 30 d (Bauer & Glutz 1966), eggs must have been laid no later than the first half of February, or even in late January 1983. The fairly constant water level from July 1982 to March 1983 was certainly conducive to this successful breeding of flamingos at Lake Nakuru, the first recorded since 1951. It is astonishing that breeding succeeded despite the many Marabous *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* which are attracted to the lake in large numbers by the open rubbish dumps of Lake Nakuru Lodge.